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distinctively and more coarsely patterned "spotting structure", when compared to the structure of
DE 44 07 989.

On page 7, starting at line 8, please amend as follows:

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With the process according to the present invention, a linoleum-based planar structure that displays a smooth plain surface and has a unique "spotting structure", can be produced in the way described above without the need of any grinding step due to the specifically flat shaped flakes used. Consequently, planar structures like floor coverings having a unique "spotting structure", i.e. a more distinctively and more coarsely patterned "spotting structure" when compared to the structure of DE 44 07989, which have so far not been attainable, can be produced in a simple manner.

In the Claims

On page 11, line 1, please insert:

What is claimed is:

Please cancel claims 1-18 without prejudice or disclaimer.

Please add the following new claims:

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37-56

19. (New) A linoleum-based planar structure comprising:

a planar structure formed of a linoleum base composition, the planar structure containing

Product claim
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over the whole cross section thereof flakes comprising an organic polymeric material, the flakes being compatible with the linoleum base composition and having a particle size in the range of

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0.5 mm to 30 mm and a thickness in the range of 1.0 μ m to 400 μ m.

20. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19 wherein the thickness of the flakes is within the range of 1.5 μm to 50 μm .
21. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19, wherein the organic polymeric material is selected from the group consisting of a material containing the reaction product of at least one dicarboxylic acid or one polycarboxylic acid or derivatives thereof or a mixture thereof with at least one epoxidation product of a carboxylic acid ester or a mixture of said epoxidation products, poly(meth)acrylates, polyvinylacetates, and a mixture thereof.
22. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the dicarboxylic acid is maleic acid, itaconic acid, fumaric acid, succinic acid, methylsuccinic acid, malic acid, furandicarboxylic acid, phthalic acid, tartaric acid, or citraconic acid, or a mixture thereof containing at least two of these acids.
23. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the polycarboxylic acid is selected from citric acid, aconitic acid or trimellitic acid.
24. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the derivative of the di- or polycarboxylic acid is an anhydride or a partial ester.
25. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the alcohol component of the partial ester is a polyol.

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26. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the mixture of at least one di- or polycarboxylic acid or derivatives thereof is a mixture of a partial ester of maleic acid anhydride and dipropylene glycol with citric acid.
27. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 21, wherein the epoxidation product of a carboxylic acid ester is epoxidized linseed oil, epoxidized soybean oil, epoxidized castor oil, epoxidized rape-seed oil or vernonia oil, or a mixture thereof containing at least two of these epoxidized products.
28. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19, wherein the flakes are present in an amount ranging from 1 to 15 wt-%, based on the total amount of linoleum base composition.
29. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19, wherein the planar structure has a thickness in the range of 0.8 mm to 4.0 mm.
30. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19, wherein the flakes are single-colored or multi-colored.
31. (New) The linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 30, wherein the flakes are provided with an optical brightening agent, a fluorescent agent or a phosphorescent agent or a mixture thereof.

32. (New) A process for producing a linoleum-based planar structure according to claim 19, comprising the steps of:

- (a) preparing a linoleum base composition,
- (b) adding flakes comprising an organic polymeric material, the flakes being compatible with the linoleum base composition and having a particle size in the range of 0.5 mm to 30 mm and a thickness in the range of 1.0 μm to 400 μm to the linoleum base composition, and

(c) rolling out the linoleum composition obtained in step (b) by means of a roller assembly into a linoleum sheet.

33. (New) The process according to claim 32, wherein the step (c) concurrently includes the steps of providing a carrier in web form and coating one side of the carrier with at least one upper layer of the linoleum composition obtained in step (b).

34. (New) The process according to step 33, further comprising the steps of:

- (d) cutting the linoleum sheet obtained in step (c) into chips by means of rotating cutters,
- (e) rolling out the thus obtained chips by means of a roller assembly into a linoleum sheet, and
- (f) optionally applying the linoleum sheet obtained in step (e) as a wear layer onto a single layer linoleum web to obtain a multi-layered linoleum floor covering.

35. (New) The process according to claim 34, wherein before step (e) chips of different color are added to the chips obtained in step (d).

36. (New) The process of claim 34, further including the step of:
combining the chips with differently colored chips.

37. (New) A planar structure comprising:

a linoleum sheet containing flakes distributed throughout a substantial portion of a cross-section of the linoleum sheet, wherein the flakes include an organic polymeric material and wherein each of the flakes has a particle size greater than a thickness thereof by a factor of at least 2.5.

38. (New) The planar structure of claim 36, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 0.5 mm and about 30 mm and a thickness between about 1.0 and about 400 μm .

39. (New) The planar structure of claim 36, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 0.5 mm and about 10 mm and a thickness between about 10 μm and about 100 μm .

40. (New) The planar structure of claim 36, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 1.5 mm and about 10 mm and a thickness between about 1.5 μm and about 50 μm .

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cont

41. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷~~36~~, wherein each of the flakes has a thickness between about 1.5 μm and about 50 μm .
42. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷~~36~~, wherein the organic polymeric material includes at least one polymer selected from a poly (meth)acrylate, a polyvinylacetate, a product of a reaction between a carboxylic acid and an epoxidation product of a carboxylic acid ester, and a mixture thereof.
43. (New) The planar structure of claim 41, wherein the carboxylic acid is a dicarboxylic acid.
44. (New) The planar structure of claim 42, wherein the dicarboxylic acid is selected from maleic acid, itaconic acid, fumaric acid, succinic acid, methylsuccinic acid, malic acid, furandicarboxylic acid, phthalic acid, tartaric acid, citraconic acid and mixtures thereof.
45. (New) The planar structure of claim 41, wherein the carboxylic acid is a polycarboxylic acid.
46. (New) The planar structure of claim 44, wherein the polycarboxylic acid is selected from citric acid, aconitic acid, trimellitic acid and mixtures thereof.
47. (New) The planar structure of claim 41, wherein the carboxylic acid is a carboxylic acid derivative selected from an anhydride, a partial ester and mixture thereof.

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48. (New) The planar structure of claim 46, wherein an alcohol component of the partial ester is a polyol.

49. (New) The planar structure of claim 47, wherein the polyol is selected from dipropylene glycols, propanediols, butanediols, hexanetriols, pentaerythritols, glycerins and mixtures thereof.

50. (New) The planar structure of claim 48, wherein the organic polymeric material includes a mixture of citric acid with a partial ester of maleic anhydride and dipropylene glycol.

51. (New) The planar structure of claim 49, wherein the mixture includes up to about 50% by weight citric acid.

52. (New) The planar structure of claim 49, wherein the mixture includes up to about 25% by weight citric acid.

53. (New) The planar structure of claim 41, wherein the epoxidation product of a carboxylic acid ester is selected from epoxidized linseed oil, epoxidized soybean oil, epoxidized castor oil, epoxidized rape-seed oil, epoxidized veronia oil and a mixture thereof.

54. (New) The planar structure of claim 36, wherein the linoleum sheet includes from about 1% to about 15% by weight of the flakes.

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55. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷36, wherein the linoleum sheet has a thickness of about 0.8 mm to about 4.0 mm.

56. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷36, wherein the flakes are single-colored.

57. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷36, wherein the flakes are multi-colored.

58. (New) The planar structure of claim ³⁷36, wherein the flakes include at least one agent selected from an optical brightening agent, a fluorescent agent, a phosphorescent agent and a mixture thereof.

59. (New) A process of producing a planar structure comprising:

preparing a linoleum base composition;

combining flakes with the linoleum base composition to form a flake-linoleum composition, wherein the flakes include an organic polymeric material, and wherein each of the flakes has a particle size greater than the thickness thereof by at least a factor of 2.5;

forming a linoleum sheet from the flake-linoleum composition.

60. (New) The process of claim ⁵⁹58, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 0.5 mm and about 30 mm and a thickness between about 1.0 μ m and about 400 μ m.

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61. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 0.5 mm and about 10 mm and a thickness between about 10 μ m and about 100 μ m.
62. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein each of the flakes has a particle size between about 1.5 mm and about 10 mm and a thickness between about 1.5 μ m and about 50 μ m.
63. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein each of the flakes has a thickness between about 1.5 μ m and about 50 μ m.
64. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein the organic polymeric material includes at least one polymer selected from a poly (meth)acrylate, a polyvinylacetate, a product of a reaction between a carboxylic acid and an epoxidation product of a carboxylic acid ester, and a mixture thereof.
65. (New) The process of claim 63, wherein the carboxylic acid is a dicarboxylic acid.
66. (New) The process of claim 64, wherein the dicarboxylic acid is selected from maleic acid, itaconic acid, fumaric acid, succinic acid, methylsuccinic acid, malic acid, furandicarboxylic acid, phthalic acid, tartaric acid, citraconic acid and mixtures thereof.
67. (New) The process of claim 63, wherein the carboxylic acid is a polycarboxylic acid.

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68. (New) The process of claim 66, wherein the polycarboxylic acid is selected from citric acid, aconitic acid, trimellitic acid and mixtures thereof.
69. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein the flakes are uniformly distributed throughout the linoleum sheet.
70. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein the linoleum sheet is formed with a carrier in web form coated with a layer of the flake-linoleum composition.
71. (New) The process of claim 58, wherein the linoleum sheet is formed by means of a roller assembly.
72. (New) The process of claim 58, further including the steps of:
cutting the linoleum sheet into chips; and,
forming a second linoleum sheet from the chips;
73. (New) The process of claim 71, further including the step of:
applying the second linoleum sheet onto a single layer linoleum web to form a multi-layered linoleum floor covering.

REMARKS

Consideration of the present application is respectfully requested. The present application claims priority to European Application No. 00 116 317.9-2113, filed July 27, 2000.